

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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P R 232121Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9303
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3901

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, CI
SUBJECT: SANTIAGO HUNGER STRIKERS IN SECOND DAY

REF: SANTIAGO 3861

1. FIFTY NINE WOMEN AND SIX MEN CONTINUE THE HUNGER STRIKE THEY BEGAN MAY 22 AT THE UNICEF BUILDING AND THREE CHURCHES IN SANTIAGO. UNICEF'S DIRECTOR TELLS US PRIVATELY THAT HE HAS RECEIVED "SOLIDARITY CALLS" FROM WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE AS WELL AS NUMEROUS TELEGRAMS. THE NINE AT UNICEF HAVE MADE NO DEMANDS BEYOND THEIR FIRST REQUEST THAT THE UN BE INFORMED OF THEIR PRESENCE. UNICEF HAS A DOCTOR STANDING BY BUT SO FAR THE HEALTH OF THE STRIKERS REMAINS GOOD.

2. THE VICARS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTIAGO MET ON THE EVENING OF MAY 22. AUXILIARY BISHOP JORGE HOURTON ANNOUNCED LATER THAT THEY HAD AGREED TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE GOC "THROUGH THE REGULAR LIAISON" (I.E., RETIRED GENERAL COURT) IN ORDER TO SEEK WAYS FOR REACHING THE "MOST PEACEFUL POSSIBLE SOLUTION".

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3. THE STORY HAS BEEN FULLY REPORTED, INCLUDING EXCERPTS FROM THE RELATIVES' DECLARATION, ON INSIDE PAGES OF THE MAJOR DAILIES. ONE QUOTES A GOVERNMENT SOURCE AS STATING THAT THE TIMING SUSPICIOUSLY COINCIDES WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE AFL-CIO SOLIDARITY GROUP. HE BLAMES THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY FOR ORGANIZING "YET ANOTHER" INCIDENT WHICH WILL

BE DISTORTED OUT OF PROPORTION INTERNATIONALLY.

4. COMMENT: THE EIGHT SANTIAGO VICARS HAVE TAKEN A MORE SYMPATHETIC AND SUPPORTIVE VIEW OF THE RELATIVES' PROBLEMS THAN THE REST OF THE CHURCH HIERARCHY. AT THE TIME OF THE APRIL AMNESTY, THE CARDINAL FORCED THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY TO ISSUE A STATEMENT IN THE CHURCH'S NAME WHICH GLOSSED OVER THE CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF THE MEASURE. A FEW DAYS LATER, AFTER THE CARDINAL HAD LEFT CHILE FOR A TRIP THROUGH EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES, THE VICARS OF SANTIAGO ISSUED THEIR OWN DECLARATION WHICH APPEALED TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COURTS TO CONTINUE INVESTIGATIONS TO CLARIFY THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE DISAPPEARED.
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